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INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0423
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 0302
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0229
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C O N F I D E N T I A L DUSHANBE 000147

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/CEN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [TI](#)

SUBJECT: TAJIKISTAN GOVERNMENT SHUFFLE - STRIKE A BLOW FOR
MORE OF THE SAME

REF: A. (A) 2008 DUSHANBE 1582

[B](#). (B) DUSHANBE 130

[C](#). (C) 2008 DUSHANBE 169

Classified By: Ambassador Tracey A. Jacobson, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#). (C) Summary: In the annual Tajik government reshuffle, President Rahmon replaced the heads of major state enterprises and a variety of district heads and deputy ministers. Like last year's reshuffle, government changes were mainly at the district and deputy minister level. The only cabinet level change this year was also the move with the greatest potential significance, the appointment of a northerner as Minister of Interior. Despite years of rumors about their impending retirements, the Prime Minister and Defense Minister remained in their jobs. There has been no general change of Ministers since late 2006. End summary.

State Industries Punished

[2](#). (C) In December President Rahmon fired the Director of Tajik Air, Hokimsho Tilloev who, senior presidential economic

advisers told us, opposed and slowed Tajik Air's breakup into separate air and ground services companies (ref A). He left for a wealthy retirement. His successor was Alimurod Mahmadaliev, previously of the state anti-corruption agency. In the mid-January reshuffle, Rahmon fired the heads of the state electricity monopoly, Barki Tojik, the state gas monopoly, and the state-owned cement and chemicals companies. His stated reasons for removing them were poor management practices and their failure to adequately prepare for the winter.

[3](#). (C) On January 30 Rahmon replaced the Minister of Interior. He selected a northerner as the new Minister, Abdurahim Qahhorov, previously the regional Ministry of Interior head in Sugdh Oblast (ref B). This was the first northerner Rahmon had appointed to a "power" ministry (i.e. a security service). (Note: Embassy political specialist recalls that in 1992, prior to becoming President, Rahmon told the U.S. DCM that if he succeeded in becoming leader of Tajikistan, he would never allow a northerner to control a security-related ministry.)

[4](#). (C) Rahmon also issued his usual public warnings to various senior officials that they needed to shape up, or ship out. President Rahmon has previously used such warnings as a means of deflecting responsibility for the country's problems, and showing that he is trying to promote change

(ref C). One of the officials so warned was the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, who was told to improve his performance in the next six months, or lose his job. The exact basis for the criticism was unclear, but it doesn't say much for judicial independence.

Corruption Not Punished

¶5. (C) One notable change was the dismissal of the State Tax Committee Chairman. His replacement, Nusratullo Davlatov, was previously First Deputy Chairman of the Committee. Davlatov is likely to bring to the Chairmanship a strong understanding of tax fraud issues; he is the French Embassy's landlord, and French embassy staff told us Davlatov falsified his own tax returns, claiming he received only \$500 per month from the French, when in fact they pay him \$5,000.

¶6. (C) Comment: Despite mismanagement of last winter's power shortage, and a repeat of power shortages this year, Rahmon has chosen to limit major changes to the heads of some of the state enterprises. Blaming and punishing the gas and electricity chiefs for mismanagement seems an obvious step to deflect blame from the President for the power and gas cutoffs in Tajikistan. But the emphasis on accountability for state enterprises undermines the legitimacy of political leaders below the President. Like the long-serving and loyal - but harmless - Prime Minister, the cabinet ministers are made to seem largely irrelevant to the country's future. In government, only the President matters. It is, however, difficult for Rahmon to replace ministers; the heads of ministries and other senior officials represent business

clans with their hands on control of imports of key goods such as gas and wheat, cotton production, or control of retail centers around the country. Cutting them off from political power could upset too many other hidden interests.

¶7. (C) Comment continued: However, the appointment of a northerner to a power ministry may signify Rahmon's growing unease with rivals within his own ranks, and a need to broaden his political base. It may also signal an effort by Rahmon to curry favor in northern Tajikistan, which has been hardest hit by winter power shortages. Whatever the larger political meaning, it was a move to shake up (and possibly clean up) the Interior Ministry, which had signal failures last year in the Rasht Valley and in Khorog. New Minister Qahhorov promptly fired two deputy ministers and the head of the organized crime unit. End comment.

JACOBSON